

West Huntsville Civic Association
2808 7th Avenue SW
Huntsville, AL 35805

Judge Madeline Haikala , United States District Judge
c/o United States District Courthouse
Hugo L. Black U.S. Courthouse
1729 Fifth Avenue North
Birmingham, AL 35203

2015 MAR -6 A 11:03

U.S. DISTRICT COURT
N.D. OF ALABAMA

February 27, 2015

Regarding: The Huntsville City Schools Consent Agreement

Your Honour,

We are writing you on behalf of our neighborhood regarding the proposed Consent Order that the Huntsville City Schools Administration and the United States Department of Justice will be presenting to the Court. While, overall, the proposed agreement is an improvement over the current state of affairs, we are asking the Court to please modify a small five block area of the student assignment portion of the Consent Agreement. Specifically, this area comprises everything from 1st Street on the east to Triana Boulevard on the west and 6th Avenue on the north to 10th Avenue on the south. While we understand that the student assignment lines must fall somewhere, we ask that the few current and future students that live in this small neighborhood be allowed to attend the same schools and not be divided with some sent along a dangerous route far away from their neighbors. We are requesting that the plan be modified so that these five blocks attend Jones Valley Elementary, Huntsville Middle and Huntsville High School.

Our neighborhood has suffered grievously under past Huntsville City School administrations. We feel it is important to let you know what has happened up to this point and what modification of the plan means to our neighborhood. We are a small 116 year old former cotton mill village that worked with the mill to secure the land and raise money to build a neighborhood school to better the lives of our people. This same neighborhood which was once known as the Town of West Huntsville, and as such was one of Huntsville's first suburbs, was forcibly annexed against our wishes by this city. At which point, our school had to be handed over to the Huntsville City School system. We watched our once healthy schools spiral down under the management of a city system that failed us miserably. We watched as neighbors were forcibly removed from their homes through eminent domain in order for this same school system to increase the size of our neighborhood school upon their former home sites. Our school was ultimately ripped away from our neighborhood and closed due to bad decisions, questionable management and inaction over the course of decades. The end result was the loss of the school the neighborhood once took pride in.

We are the same neighborhood that repeatedly asked that something be done to help our neighborhood schools only to be forced to watch what had been a focal point and place of pride become a source of heartache and failure with no tangible intervention by this school system. When the previous school board chose to act upon an appointed committee's advice and close West Huntsville Elementary and Stone Middle School, it is sad to say that that we watched with

mixed emotions of heartache but also relief that these once great schools were closed with Butler High's fate clearly headed in the same direction. The fact that the neighborhood that helped build and took such pride in these schools can go on record that it was a relief to see these schools shuttered and closed due to the fact that they had become horrible fragments of what they once were is extremely telling.

We have suffered much at the hands of prior administrations oversight of our neighborhood schools and while we are hoping for a better future for the entire city school system under this new superintendent and a school board comprised of majority newly elected representatives, it comes too late to help restore our neighborhood schools. While we cannot bring back West Huntsville Elementary or Stone Middle and Butler High is too far gone to save, we can only hope things will continue to improve under this new leadership.

We desperately need to regain the neighborhood unity, sense of place and pride that we have been cost. Fracturing a struggling neighborhood like this is wrong! Once Butler High closes, this will be the only neighborhood in this entire city that will have lost all three of its neighborhood schools (other impacted neighborhoods will have replacement schools or they have not lost all three or any at all). This area is a tiny neighborhood that has suffered from decades of poor choices from past administrations within the school system and is hurting very badly because of it. We are asking that the plan be modified for the aforementioned area which comprises only a five block section of our neighborhood. It is a low-income area that is highly ethnically diverse which should not present a problem with ratios if it is zoned to the aforementioned schools. These are mainly small two bedroom houses so there will be few students anyway. Modification of the plan would send all of our children through the same schools and boost morale, neighborhood pride and cohesiveness. Don't we, after everything we have been through, deserve at least this much?

From a safety standpoint, everyone has been extremely worried about Monte Sano Elementary students eventually having to go to Lee High from a road safety and traffic standpoint but what about the few students that live in the aforementioned area of west Huntsville? Why should they be forced to travel 10 miles through dangerous traffic (I-565 Interstate or Research Park) on heavily traveled roads when Huntsville High is literally a mile up the street? It makes no sense at all to compromise the safety of the handful of students and the parents that live in this part of our neighborhood. The plan that Huntsville City Schools and the Justice Department have agreed upon zones most of the neighborhood to Huntsville High and its feeder schools anyway so why not modify it to include this small five block area? This poor neighborhood has survived much over the last 116 years of its existence, please modify the plan so that our neighborhood is not fractured and the few children that live here now and in the future will not be separated. Modifying the plan would help pull this little neighborhood back together and help stabilize the area. Now is possibly our only chance to correct the mistakes made in the past and repair some of the harm caused to our neighborhood and we are begging you to please modify the plan.

We do not understand why the latest proposed Consent Order assigns the area that comprises Pratt, Ward, Beirne, McCullough and O'Shaughnessy Avenue in northeast Huntsville to be zoned to Huntsville High School when it is much closer to Lee High and not as ethnically diverse as our neighborhood. It certainly does not have a dangerous route to traverse. If the Pratt to O'Shaughnessy area is zoned for Huntsville High, then shouldn't the similarly sized 6th to 10th Avenue and 1st Street to Triana Boulevard area be treated the same? And if not, then what possible justification is there to zone the primarily caucasian, higher income northeast Pratt Avenue area to a school

farther away versus zoning the aforementioned low income, highly ethnically diverse west Huntsville area to Columbia, a school that is too far away and that must be reached over a hazardous route? We do not understand why the Huntsville City School system chose to make this recommendation for one area and not the other and ask that it be corrected in that the five blocks are moved to Huntsville High and its feeders.

The Court is our only hope. Please help us by modifying this plan. If you would like to speak with someone regarding concerns and this request, please contact us at: ;
Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

The West Huntsville Civic Association Board,

Michelle McMullen
Susan E. Gill

Candy Aldridge
Ray Aldridge

Jean Hamaker
Rodger Hamaker